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The *Macbeth* motif throughout *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* has been extensively discussed by Dickensian scholars and amateurs alike. Besides the narrator's pervasive references to Shakespeare's play, most notably the ominous title of Chapter 14 "When shall these Three meet again?," there are many parallels in the action. For example, Jasper has hideous visions of the murder that he feels compelled to commit and, at the same time, deeply abhors; Macbeth sees the "air-drawn dagger" before he goes reluctantly to kill his beloved kinsman and guest. In both cases, an innocent party is elaborately "framed" for the crime (Neville in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* the grooms and the young princes in *Macbeth*). Meanwhile, the murderer in each instance goes free, still self-tormented and a threat to others.

The novel also has its own "witch," Princess Puffer, a hag whose riddling words of intended revenge against Jasper as she bubbles her opium-pipes could not be more strongly evocative of the "weird sisters," the blasted heath, the cauldron, and Macbeth's own disastrous "trafficking" with Fate. But in addition to these powerful Shakespearean echoes, of which Dickens the mature craftsman was certainly aware, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* also suggests a persistent theme that the novelist shared with Shakespeare: the misuse of time.

Macbeth and Jasper both demonstrate a warped perspective on time. Macbeth kills Duncan, we recall, not only because he wants to be king now but also because he wants to found a future dynasty of kings as the perfection of his love for Lady Macbeth. When the witches show him the apparition of Banquo's royal descendants stretching out to the "crack of Doom" (IV, 1), Macbeth realizes that he has indeed traded his soul for a "fruitless crown" (III, 1); thereafter he becomes the grieving, insomniac, furious child-killer of the latter part of the play. Similarly, Jasper loses the possible pleasures of the present because of his two obsessions: one with the unknown forces in the past which apprenticed him to an unsuitable career that he feels it is "too late"[1] to change, and secondly, with the imagined future when he will finally possess Rosa. It is the loss of the present moment, the only moment in which we can truly live, that makes existence seem tedious, "a tale/ Told by an idiot" (V, v) to both Macbeth and Jasper.

Like Shakespeare, Dickens understood the necessity of a well-balanced use of the time of memory, the time of living, and the time of

anticipation; that is why, after all, the haunted Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* must promise his last ghostly caller that "the Spirits of all Three [that is, the Past, the Present, and the Future] will strive within me." When Scrooge makes this promise, the phantom changes into a bedpost and he awakens to joyous life. Jasper also wakes up clutching a bedpost in the famous opening paragraph of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* but his return to consciousness is of a very different kind. Jasper's drug-induced dream can teach him nothing but futility.

In a sense, his addiction is a misguided attempt at creativity; Jasper wishes to fashion a fourth zone of time, an alternate reality, in which the painful burden of his past and the painful distance of his imagined future will be obliterated, temporarily, at a very steep price. As Macbeth has "murder'd Sleep" (II, 2), so Jasper has murdered that healthy continuity of the self that is essential to adult mental health.

When we speak about the integration of the self, we are really discussing an individual's ability to cherish or use his past constructively, to be zestfully engaged in life in the present, and to work energetically so that the future will be just as pleasurable as the present—or even more so. Like numerous other characters in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* Jasper is too divided, too dissociated for any such wholeness of being.

When Christmas Day dawns for Scrooge, his three "therapists" the spirits have led him to the achievement of this wholeness. But when Christmas Day dawns for Jasper, after the presumed murder of Edwin at his hands during the storm of *Macbeth*-like proportions the night before, we see that "the hands of the Cathedral clock are torn off" (p. 165). The symbolic connection between clocks and the misuse of time and life occurs repeatedly in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood.* Jasper is not the only character who is stuck in those inappropriate regions of time which breed mental disease and arrest normal growth of the personality.

When Rosa and Edwin end the engagement made between them so long ago in the wills of their widowed fathers, for example, they immediately begin to behave less childishly. They show the kind of mature affection and compassion for each other that we might expect of fellow sufferers from the weight of the past; they sensibly reject the limiting life-scenario that their distracted fathers wrote for them, breathe freely for the first time, and take up their own authentic lives apart. As Edwin pities the two engaged children that they once were, he finds significantly that "his watch has stopped [and] turns into the jeweller's shop to have it wound and set" (p. 158). Appropriately, the jeweller reminds him "not to let it run down" (p. 159)—in short, not to get

stuck in time. Once Edwin is liberated from the past, the personality of this formerly somewhat insensitive young man starts developing in a rapid, most promising manner.

Whether we belong to the "undertaker" school of thought on the insoluble mystery of Edwin's disappearance or the "resurrectionist" school, I think we can all agree that his new-found capacity to use the present more wisely may be a compelling argument in favor of his eventual re-appearance as a deeper person. After all, Dickens seldom disposes of mentally healthy, maturing young men (think, for example, of shipwrecked Walter Gay in *Dombey and Son*). Or one might say, in the language of *David Copperfield,* that Edwin seems to be emerging at this point as "the hero of [his] own life."

At the beginning of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* there are just two characters who have already achieved that integration of personality and capacity for further psychological expansion which only comes on the terms of a positive relation to their past, present, and future. These two are Crisparkle and Helena Landless. We see their higher level of development at first chiefly through their enduring, touching primary relationships, Crisparkle with his charming "china shepherdess" mother and Helena with her "tigerish" brother Neville. It is only natural for Crisparkle and Helena to admire one another, become allies, and perhaps to fall in love. These two proceed from strength to strength in each encounter with the other characters in the novel. The more we see them, the more they impress us with their loyalty to the ties of the past, competence in the face of the challenges of the present, and vigorous striving towards a sunnier future for those they love and for themselves. Perhaps it is because Helena and Crisparkle have *already* proven themselves the heroes of their own lives that they are a shade less interesting than the characters who have just begun the process of mature integration of the self.

Among these more absorbing characters, Rosa and her guardian Mr. Grewgious make the most astonishing progress. Interestingly, their growth can only occur in London and thereabouts. Cloisterham is a whole town stuck in the past. This grotesque setting alone—with its graveyards, crypts, and mausoleums—suggest an enlarged version of Miss Havisham's mansion with its cobwebs and stopped clocks. Both represent unhealthy modes of existence, unassimilated experience. As Mr. Grewgious exclaims, peering into the mouldy Cathedral where he seeks Jasper, "Dear me, it's like looking down the throat of Old Time" (p. 94).

Mr. Grewgious describes himself vividly as an "Angular" man of business who feels within Miss Twinkleton's school for girls "as if he

was a bear—with the cramp—in a youthful cotillion" (p. 88). He goes on to explain his dissimilarity from youth as follows:

> I was the only offspring of parents far advanced in life, and I half believe I was born advanced in life myself....I remark that while the general growth of people seem to have come into existence, buds, I seem to have come into existence a chip. I was a chip—and a very dry one—when I first became aware of myself.
>
> (p. 90)

Despite Mr. Grewgious's doubts about having any connection with youthfulness and the ability to grow, he does loosen up and become a fuller personality as he acts on Rosa's behalf. Prompted perhaps by remembrances of Rosa's mother, whom he loved from afar, Mr. Grewgious bestirs himself to explain the will in such feeling terms that both Edwin and Rosa review the prospect of their ill-considered marriage. Here Mr. Grewgious shows his fidelity not only to his legal obligations but also to the past, the present, and the possible future. He becomes increasingly capable of this continuity of perspective, the "long view" that in part makes us mature, well-balanced adults. As he sees more of Rosa when she flees to him in London for protection from Jasper, Mr. Grewgious finds himself surprisingly able to cope with the dangers that the future may bring and also—perhaps for the first time—to enjoy the pleasures attainable in the present with the lightheartedness of a boy.

When Mr. Tartar offers an outing to the "delicious" springtime countryside in his boat, for example, Mr. Grewgious cannot resist, remarking, "I have not been up the river for this many a day" (p. 246). Moreover, he tries his hand at rowing, falls backward, and laughs at the comic spectacle that he presents. In short, Mr. Grewgious behaves in the manner of Scrooge when he awakens in such high spirits on Christmas Day that he dances as he shaves. Mr. Grewgious, too, has regained that connection with his own childhood that is essential for emotional well-being in later life. Now he can thoroughly relish the present, remain faithful to the past, and plan for the future. No longer a "chip," Mr. Grewgious is becoming an integrated personality—or, as he might say, a "bud" that is opening up. His life has expanded at last to include attachments, pleasures, and possibilities far beyond the office.

Even more certainly, Mr. Grewgious's ward Rosa ceases to be a rather over-indulged, over-protected schoolgirl and emerges as a spirited young woman. When Rosa takes the mature step of initiating the serious conversation with Edwin in Chapter 13 "Both at Their Best,"

she transcends the silly pet name Pussy and her personality as the "Little Miss Impudence" of his portrait. She also becomes the most realistic, most likeable young heroine in Dickens. The transformation is almost as dramatic as if Dora Copperfield had acquired the capacity to grow up.

We are more prepared for Rosa's change because she has already demonstrated a greater degree of perception than Edwin about the distorting effects of their unnatural engagement: "I am a young little thing, Eddy, to have an old heartache" (p. 33), she exclaims to him on her birthday walk. Once this unfair pressure from the past is released and Rosa is free to be herself, she behaves at once in a more mature, sympathetic manner. She also becomes a more genuinely young individual, capable of such pleasures of youth as falling in love or enjoying a springtime excursion to the country.

In addition, Rosa becomes almost as resourceful as her friend Helena. She flees Cloisterham after Jasper's terrifying revelations by the sun-dial, for example, and finds Mr. Grewgious and other allies in London. She also shows that she can now handle the more ordinary challenges of the present quite adequately, as when we see her functioning in the role of the tolerant, amused spectator and referee of those verbal skirmishes between her elders Billickin and Miss Twinkleton over types of meat. Most striking of all, she begins to think in more sophisticated terms.

As Rosa returns from the exuberant trip up the river "among the delicious odours of limes in bloom" and the company of the dashing sailor Mr. Tartar, for example, she feels that the gray contrast that the city presents is an emotional let-down:

> ...the everlastingly-green garden seemed to be left for everlasting, unregainable and far away.
> "Cannot people get through life without gritty stages, I wonder?" Rosa thought next day...She began to think that, now the Cloisterham school-days had glided past and gone, the gritty stages would begin to set in at intervals and make themselves wearily known!
>
> (p. 247)

As we older adults know about unsettled, trying periods of transition in our lives, the answer to Rosa's age-appropriate question is, of course, "No, people *can't* get through life without 'gritty stages.'" It is the stages of stress or waiting that propel us towards greater growth and integration in personality. These intervals also enable us more fully to appreciate those other, more welcome intervals of refreshment

and renewal in the "everlastingly-green garden" that we associate with childhood's capacity for joy. We never lose access to this Eden if we become mentally healthy adults, like the reformed Scrooge, in communication with our past, present, and future selves. When we have our last glimpse of Rosa in the novel, she is happily absorbed in a new interest—reading books "of voyages and sea-adventure" (p. 253)—which may have some bearing on her romantic future.

In any event, we can safely say at this point that Rosa has progressed through her first round of life's "gritty stages" quite splendidly. No longer the passive victim of her father's will, unnaturally stuck in the past, she has fulfilled the promise of her surname Bud; she has blossomed. As Rosa grows and the net tightens about Jasper in the two last-written chapters of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* springtime symbolically returns in full glory. Or in the language of the last act of the play by Shakespeare that most influenced Dickens's unfinished novel, "the time is free" (*Macbeth,* V, vii). In fact, even that region that we connect most closely with dislocations in time—the Cathedral, a place of stopped clocks and closed tombs—seems to come to life. The narrator describes this amazing metamorphosis in religious terms:

> Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods, and fields—or, rather, from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time—penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life.
>
> (p. 269)

All of England now seems to be in harmony with the general movement of such characters as Mr. Grewgious and Rosa towards a more abundant, integrated, and constructive life.

NOTE

[1]Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* "Afterword" by James Wright (New York, 1961), p. 20. All subsequent quotations from the novel refer to this edition.